

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: SWORDFISH (2021)

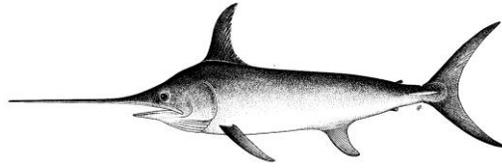


TABLE 1. Status of swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) in the Indian Ocean

Area <sup>1</sup>	Indicators		2021 stock status determination
Indian Ocean	Catch 2020 <sup>2</sup> (t)	26,005	98%
	Average catch 2016-2020 (t)	30,858	
	MSY (1,000 t) (80% CI)	33 (27–40)	
	F <sub>MSY</sub> (80% CI)	0.23 (0.15–0.31)	
	SB <sub>MSY</sub> (1,000 t) (80% CI)	59 (41–77)	
	F <sub>2018</sub> /F <sub>MSY</sub> (80% CI)	0.60 (0.40–0.83)	
SB <sub>2018</sub> /SB <sub>MSY</sub> (80% CI)	1.75 (1.28–2.35)		
SB <sub>2018</sub> /SB <sub>1950</sub> (80% CI)	0.42 (0.36–0.47)		

<sup>1</sup> Boundaries for the Indian Ocean stock assessment are defined as the IOTC area of competence

<sup>2</sup> Proportion of 2020 catch fully or partially estimated by IOTC Secretariat: 4.3%

Colour key	Stock overfished (SB <sub>year</sub> /SB <sub>MSY</sub> < 1)	Stock not overfished (SB <sub>year</sub> /SB <sub>MSY</sub> ≥ 1)
Stock subject to overfishing (F <sub>year</sub> /F <sub>MSY</sub> > 1)	0.005	0.005
Stock not subject to overfishing (F <sub>year</sub> /F <sub>MSY</sub> ≤ 1)	0.01	0.98
Not assessed/Uncertain		

### INDIAN OCEAN STOCK – MANAGEMENT ADVICE

**Stock status.** A new assessment was undertaken in 2020 using stock synthesis with fisheries data up to 2018. The assessment uses a spatially disaggregated, sex explicit and age structured model. The SS3 model, used for stock status advice, indicated that MSY-based reference points were not exceeded for the Indian Ocean population as a whole (F<sub>2018</sub>/F<sub>MSY</sub> < 1; SB<sub>2018</sub>/SB<sub>MSY</sub> > 1). The two alternative models (ASPIC and JABBA) applied to swordfish also indicated that the stock was above a biomass level that would produce MSY. Spawning biomass in 2018 was estimated to be 40-83% of the unfished levels. Most recent catches of 33,590 t in 2019 are approximately at the MSY level (33,000 t). On the weight-of-evidence available in 2020, the stock is determined to be **not overfished** and **not subject to overfishing** (Table 1, Fig. 2).

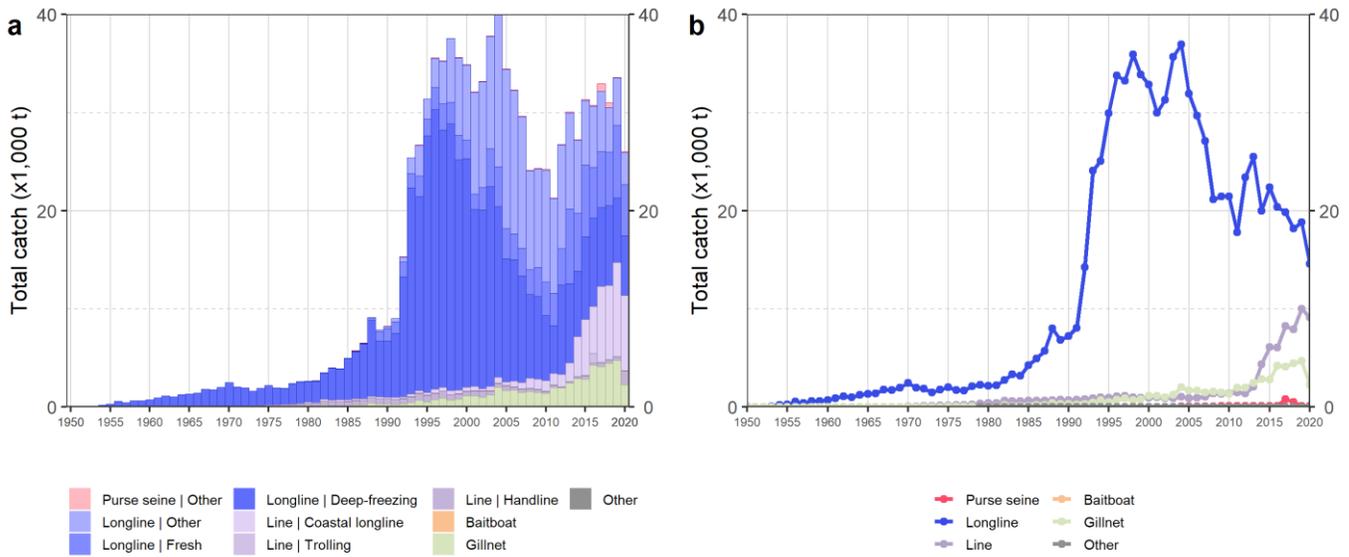
**Outlook.** The decrease in longline catch and effort from 2005 to 2011 lowered the pressure on the Indian Ocean stock as a whole, and despite the recent increase in total recorded catches, current fishing mortality is not expected to reduce the population to an overfished state over the next decade. There is a very low risk of exceeding MSY-based reference points by 2028 if catches are maintained at 2018 levels (<5% risk that SB<sub>2028</sub> < SB<sub>MSY</sub>, and <10% risk that F<sub>2028</sub> > F<sub>MSY</sub>) (Table 1). However, the Southern regions exhibit declining biomass trends which indicate higher depletion in these regions, compared to northern regions.

**Management advice.** The most recent catches (33,590 t in 2019) are at approximately the MSY level (33,000 t). Under the current levels of catches, the spawning biomass is projected to remain relatively stable, with a high probability of maintaining at or above the SB<sub>MSY</sub> for the longer term. Nevertheless, the Commission should consider limiting the catches so as not to exceed the 2018 catch level (30,847 t at the time of the assessment) to ensure that the probability of exceeding the SB<sub>MSY</sub> target reference points in the long term remains minimal (2%). Projections indicate that an increase of 40% or more from 2018 catch levels will likely result in the biomass dropping below the SB<sub>MSY</sub> level for the longer term (>75%

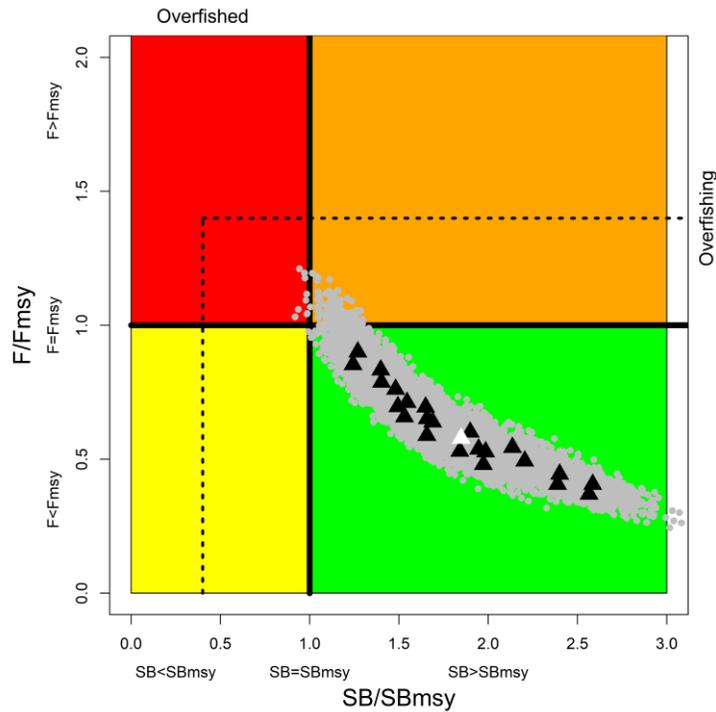
probability). Taking into account the updated information regarding swordfish stock structure (IOTC-2020-WPB18-09), as well as the differential CPUE and biomass trends between regions, the WPB should continue to discuss the swordfish stock assessment model specifications and consider the feasibility of including a multi-stock assessment in 2023. Recognising that there is recurring evidence for localised depletion in the southern regions (particularly the South West) the WPB expresses concern and suggests this should be further monitored.

The following key points should also be noted:

- **Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY):** estimate for the Indian Ocean is 33,000 t.
- **Provisional reference points:** noting that the Commission in 2015 agreed to [Resolution 15/10 on target and limit reference points and a decision framework](#), the following should be noted:
  - a. **Fishing mortality:** current fishing mortality is considered to be below the provisional target reference point of  $F_{MSY}$  and below the provisional limit reference point of  $1.4 * F_{MSY}$  (**Fig. 2**).
  - b. **Biomass:** current spawning biomass is considered to be above the target reference point of  $SB_{MSY}$ , and therefore above the limit reference point of  $0.4 * SB_{MSY}$  (**Fig. 2**).
- **Main fisheries (mean annual catch 2016-20):** offshore longline catches, including sharks and swordfish-targeted longlines, comprised more than 60% of total swordfish catches in the Indian Ocean in recent years. The remaining catches mainly came from coastal longline (~22%) and gillnets (~13%) (**Fig. 1**).
- **Main fleets (mean annual catch 2016-20):** about 65% of swordfish catches are accounted for by four fleets: Sri Lanka (longline-gillnet): ~28%; Taiwan,China (longline): ~21%; India (coastal longline):~8%; EU,Spain (swordfish-targeted longline): ~8%.



**Fig. 1.** Annual time series of (a) cumulative nominal catches (t) by fishery and (b) individual nominal catches (t) by fishery group for swordfish during 1950–2020. Longline|Other: swordfish and sharks-targeting longlines; Other: all remaining fishing gears



**Fig. 2.** Swordfish: current stock status, relative to  $SB_{MSY}$  (x-axis) and  $F_{MSY}$  (y-axis) reference points for the final model grid. Triangles represent MPD estimates from individual models (white triangle represent the estimate from the basic model). Grey dots represent uncertainty from individual models. The dashed lines represent limit reference points for Indian Ocean swordfish ( $SB_{lim} = 0.4 SB_{MSY}$  and  $F_{lim} = 1.4 * F_{MSY}$ )

**Table 2.** Swordfish: SS3 aggregated Indian Ocean assessment Kobe II Strategy Matrix. Probability (percentage) of exceeding the MSY-based target reference points for five constant catch projections relative to 2018\* catch level (30,847 t), 0%, ± 20%, ± 40% projected for 10 years

<b>Pr (SB&lt;SB<sub>MSY</sub>)</b>										
<b>Catch</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>
<b>60%</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>80%</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>100%</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02
<b>120%</b>	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.06	0.08	0.11	0.13	0.18
<b>140%</b>	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.10	0.17	0.25	0.32	0.40	0.47

<b>Pr (F&gt;F<sub>MSY</sub>)</b>										
<b>Catch</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>
<b>60%</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>80%</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>100%</b>	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.07
<b>120%</b>	0.10	0.13	0.18	0.21	0.26	0.30	0.32	0.35	0.38	0.42
<b>140%</b>	0.25	0.34	0.44	0.51	0.57	0.62	0.66	0.70	0.73	0.78

\* 2018 catches, at the time of the last swordfish assessment conducted in 2020.